

# Supports in Employment Provider Handbook

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# Contents

|  |    |
|--|----|
| About this handbook.....                                   | 3  |
| Background .....   | 3  |
| The value of employment .....                              | 3  |
| Supports in employment .....                               | 3  |
| How the NDIS funds supports in employment .....            | 5  |
| Understanding the new pricing framework .....              | 5  |
| Supports in employment .....                               | 5  |
| Group-based support.....                                   | 6  |
| Peer support workers.....                                  | 7  |
| Programs of support and typical patterns of support .....  | 7  |
| Establishment fee rules for supports in employment .....   | 9  |
| New employees .....  | 9  |
| NDIS Disability Support Worker Cost Model.....             | 10 |
| Pricing arrangements in remote and very remote areas ..... | 10 |
| Transition to the new pricing framework.....               | 11 |
| Preparing participants and NDIA staff for the change.....  | 11 |
| ADEs choosing when to transition .....                     | 11 |
| Claiming during transition .....                           | 11 |
| Provider responsibilities .....                            | 14 |
| Service agreements and Employment Contracts.....           | 14 |
| Evidence of service.....                                   | 14 |
| Additional resources .....                                 | 14 |

## About this handbook

The National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) funds a range of supports to assist National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) participants achieve their employment goals. Supports in employment is one of these types of support.

This handbook is primarily for providers of supports in employment under the registration group Specialised Supported Employment. The information is tailored to the Australian Disability Enterprise (ADE) environment to support the transition of ADEs and ADE employees to the NDIA's new pricing framework for supports in employment.

The contents are not intended to replicate or replace the information contained in the [NDIS Pricing Arrangements and Price Limits](#).

## Background

### The value of employment

There are many benefits to having a job. It can build financial independence and self-worth, improve health and wellbeing, strengthen social connections and open opportunities for skill development. NDIS funding can play a significant role in enabling participants to share in these benefits.

The employment rate of Australians with disability, particularly people with significant and lifelong disability, is low. Reflecting this, only 24% of working-age NDIS participants are in paid work (as per NDIS Participant Employment Strategy from 30 June 2019). With your help, the NDIA intends to increase this to 30% by June 2023.

### Supports in employment

Supports in employment, formerly known as specialised supported employment, is day-to-day assistance in the workplace to maintain employment, which the NDIS funds. Currently these supports are mostly delivered in Australian Disability Enterprises (ADEs).

The NDIS also funds capacity building employment supports, such as:

- employment-related assessment and counselling
- workplace assistance
- school leaver employment supports.

Supported employment has historically been provided through the Department of Social Services (DSS) with funding provided directly to an ADE as the employer. The NDIA and DSS are working together to enable more than 20,000 supported employees who work in ADEs to transition to the NDIS.

Many participants will continue to choose an ADE as their preferred employment option. Some participants working in ADEs would like to try something new or create a combination of work options to suit them. There are also many participants with significant support needs who would like to work and are able to work with the right level of support.

To help us increase the number of working-age participants in paid work, the NDIA is putting in place strategies to diversify the range of employment settings where support can be provided. This includes new pricing for supports in employment.

The new pricing for supports in employment gives participants greater choice and control about where and how they work, and who provides their supports. Participants may choose to purchase support in a range of employment settings including:

- private enterprise
- not-for-profit
- public sector
- family business
- self-employment
- social enterprise
- ADE.

In the new supports in employment framework, the provider of employment supports does not need to be the participant's employer. Separating these roles creates new opportunities for participants and providers.

It will take time to change the market and success will depend on:

- market development
- diversification among existing providers
- the emergence of new providers
- participant demand for new services.

Funding for supports in employment is located in the [Core budget](#) of a participant's plan under the support category Assistance with Social Economic and Community Participation. This reflects the day-to-day nature of supports in employment and allows for greater flexibility, such as allowing participants to increase their working hours without having to seek a plan review if more supports are needed.

The NDIA uses 3 things to determine the budget for supports in employment:

1. reports and assessments
2. participant consultation
3. participant employment goals.

Download the [Let's talk about work booklet](#) for more information on helping participants to:

- plan for employment
- explore employment goals
- plan for leaving school
- find employment providers.

Capacity-building employment supports are for participants who need time-limited capacity-building supports to help them pursue their employment goals. In an ADE setting this may include:

- interventions to reduce complex behaviours and barriers to sustaining employment
- skills development to transition from a current role to a new role either in the ADE or with a new employer
- developing a career plan.

NDIS participants can also access a range of employment supports provided by the Australian Government. More information can be found on the [Job Access website](#).

## How the NDIS funds supports in employment

The NDIS funds participants through their NDIS plan to purchase supports. It does not fund providers directly.

Supports in employment funding is available to anyone who meets NDIS access requirements, has a goal to work and who, due to the nature and impact of their disability, will require ongoing, frequent on-the-job support to pursue and achieve their employment goals.

In determining the funds in a participant's plan, the NDIA applies the principle of [reasonable and necessary](#) decision making under the NDIS Act. The NDIA considers the participant's employment goals, the number of hours the participant is working (or would like to work), the impact of the participant's disability and the level of support or supervision the participant requires to engage in work and complete their work tasks.

In implementing their plan, participants will be encouraged to discuss their employment support needs with their provider, including skills development or desire for job changes. Plan budgets can be used flexibly to assist with managing changes.

For more information about supports in employment funding visit the [Work and Study Operational Guide](#).

## Understanding the new pricing framework

### Supports in employment

Supports in employment are for participants who are employed and need extra support because of their disability.

Supports may be provided one-to-one or within a group-based setting, complementing existing or expected employer supports. Supports are claimed according to the intensity and frequency of supports delivered to achieve employment goals.

Supports can include:

- on-the-job assessments related to the impact of a person's disability on their ability to work
- job customisation
- on-the-job training and intermittent support with daily work tasks
- direct supervision and/or group-based support to enable meaningful participation at work
- supports to manage disability-related behaviour or complex needs at work
- non-face-to-face activities that are directly related to supporting a participant's employment, taking into account a participant's disability.

Physical assistance and personal care delivered in the workplace should be claimed from a participant's Core – Assistance with Daily Life budget. These supports are provided individually to participants in a range of environments, including the workplace.

Supports like managing relationships outside of work, financial and housing issues or other daily living support needs might impact a participant's attendance and focus at work. These

supports are outside the scope of employment funding and, if needed, should be discussed with a planner or LAC, to be included in a participant's plan.

## Group-based support

The NDIS Pricing Arrangements and Price Limits now lists a single unit (hourly) price for delivery of group supports. This means that providers no longer need to use the worker to participant ratio support items. Instead all group supports can be claimed by apportioning the hourly rate across the participants receiving support in the group.

We have made this change because:

- This ensures participants are paying for the supports they actually receive.
- It avoids a situation where someone working in a group of 15 is paying the same as another in a group of seven, even though the level of support is different.
- It addresses concerns that the NDIS inadvertently builds in a perverse incentive for providers to increase group sizes.
- Having a single unit price, along with the new programs of support approach helps with provider administration.

### Scenario 1 – Simple apportioning of group-based supports

XYZ ADE supports 53 NDIS participants who work across a variety of shifts at their manufacturing plant during the week. On Mondays, there is a group of 8 participants working a 6 hour shift. The group is supported by one supervising support worker.

Under the new group-based supports approach, XYZ ADE needs to apportion the supports provided to the group across each participant's plan.

This can be done by dividing the total time of the supports delivered by the ratio of support for the group working on the shift.

$360 \text{ minutes} / 8 = 45 \text{ minutes of support per participant.}$

While the expected frequency of support will influence the funding in a participant's plan, the NDIA does not mandate the ratios of support delivered in the workplace. Providers claim payments based on the actual staff-to-participant ratio of support they provide in the workplace and the frequency of that support, typically matched to the hours of work.

When determining the ratio of support, providers should consider the supervision and support provided directly to the participant during their time at work. Support roles in ADEs are described in many different ways, including:

- direct supervisor
- production manager
- disability support worker
- on-site trainer
- employment coach
- personal care worker.

Whatever the title, the important distinction is that a support worker provides direct on-the-job or non-face-to-face employment-related supports.

## Peer support workers

Some workplaces have participant peer support workers. If these workers have a defined role to supervise and support others in their work crew, the ADE should consider recognising them as part of the supporting workforce, rather than as a supported employee.

If the worker requires more than reasonable adjustments to perform their role, any additional supports need to be identified and discussed with the employee, and should be funded from the worker's plan.

### Scenario 2 - Peer support workers

Jack has worked for XYZ ADE as a supported employee for the last 10 years. He is very experienced in his role, works quite independently and provides support and supervision to his co-workers that work on the same production line to make sure they are staying on task during the shift.

Jack works with 8 other supported employees each shift and a supervising support worker is present to oversee the entirety of the production line. Jack still needs some support at the start of the day to get him started with his work, prompting after lunch and at the end of the shift but he needs little ongoing support through the day. XYZ ADE considers Jack to be a peer supervisor, although he is still a supported employee, and as a result considers the group supervised at a ratio of 1:8.

XYZ ADE claims for the supports they provide Jack above reasonable adjustment, which averages one hour of 1:1 support each shift.

## Programs of support and typical patterns of support

In 2020, the NDIA introduced **programs of support**, designed to simplify claiming arrangements when there is a typical pattern of group-based supports.

Providers can claim agreed programs of support against the related support items, using the typical pattern of support to arrive at the frequency of support within a defined time period, usually a week, which is then claimed as a multiplier of the unit price.

This typical pattern of support, when recorded and agreed with a participant, forms the basis of the service agreement and the program of support between the provider and participant. The agreed program enables the provider to claim a regular weekly amount for delivering supports during a specified period for no longer than 12 weeks.

This reduces the need for providers to record each minor change in hours or support ratios. Planned absences do not form part of a program of support, but providers can claim for unscheduled absences, as long as they had the capacity to deliver the support.

Unscheduled absences include sick leave or failure to arrive at work, but not annual leave, public holidays, long service leave or extended periods of sick leave.

The typical pattern of supports can be based on a weekly or other agreed period and can include days of attendance, hours, individual, group, non-face-to-face supports, transport, and capital centre costs. Capital centre costs can be considered in the context of usual weather patterns where employees work mainly in outdoor settings but use indoor facilities in bad weather.

### Scenario 3 – Programs of support

Sam currently works an average of 15 hours per week over 3 days for his local ADE. Before accessing the NDIS, Sam was assessed at DMI level 4. He works in transfer station recycling, sorting goods for sale and providing customer service. Sam would like to increase his work hours and is interested in building his customer service skills.

Generally, Sam works with a group of 17 employees in the recycling market, directly supervised by one staff member. He is relatively independent in his role; however, does need some 1:1 support during the day to help him with some aspects of his work, particularly when working with customers.

Sam and his supervisor work together on a development plan for the next 12 weeks to help Sam build his capacity for extra hours and learn new skills. The new plan takes into account:

- Sam's current typical pattern of supports in the group work setting and 1:1
- additional training and development
- non-face-to-face time needed to prepare training
- new on the job supports
- monitoring and recording Sam's progress.

Sam's typical pattern of supports looks like:

- 10 hours per week at 1:17
- 5 hours per week at 1:1
- 1 hour per week 1:1 non-face-to-face time

This means Sam's ADE claims 6 hours and 35 minutes per week for Sam's typical supports.

$600 \text{ minutes} / 17 = 35 \text{ minutes}$  for group-based supports

$5 \text{ hours} + 1 \text{ hour} = 6 \text{ hours}$  for 1:1 supports

Total weekly amount for supports =  $6\text{h}.35\text{m} \times \$54.30 \text{ ph} = \$357.48$

Because Sam works in a centre based environment, the ADE can also claim the centre capital cost unit price for each hour\* he works

$15 \times \$2.15 = \$32.25$  per week

Sam and his supervisor have agreed that to help him achieve his goal of working more hours in customer service for the next 12 weeks Sam will also need the following changes to his typical pattern of supports:

- + 2 hours per week of training with 2 other employees with similar goals (at 1:3)



- + 2 hours of 1:1 support while doing extra customer service shifts (7 hours total at 1:1)
- - 2 hours per week in his group based work (8 hours total at 1:17 instead of 10)
- + 1 hour of non-face-to-face support (2 hours total at 1:1)
- centre capital costs for 17 hours

This forms the basis of Sam's new program of support, which means that for the next 12 weeks, the ADE will claim a total of 10 hours and 6 minutes in supports from Sam's plan for each week he is working or \$564.03.

During the 12 weeks, Sam has a scheduled week of annual leave. The ADE does not charge Sam for this week as it is a known and expected absence.

This means the total cost of Sam's program of support is \$6,204.33 over the 12 weeks.

At the end of these 12 weeks, Sam and his supervisor will review Sam's progress towards his goal; document what has been achieved and (if relevant) the development milestones still to be achieved and make any adjustments to his support needs.

\*Refer to the [NDIS Pricing Arrangements and Price Limits](#).

Programs of support, including the amount to be claimed, must be reviewed every 12 weeks – unless specifically allowed for in the [NDIS Pricing Arrangements and Price Limits](#). This is an opportunity to evaluate progress, review goals and reset supports if needed.

Participants can exit from an agreed program of support with 2 weeks' notice without cost.

Details of any program of support should be included in the service agreement and form the basis of a service booking. The service agreements and service bookings can be for the same duration as the participant's plan.

If a participant doesn't agree to a program of support, short notice cancellation rules will apply.

## **Establishment fee rules for supports in employment**

Providers can claim an establishment fee for supports in employment for a new employee.

This fee recognises the time it takes to set up supports for a new participant and help them to implement their first plan.

To claim an establishment fee, at least 20 hours of support per month must be delivered for 3 or more consecutive months. The fee is only claimable once per participant, unless there is a significant change in the pattern of supports. Claiming additional non-face-to-face time could suffice in most of these instances.

Refer to the [NDIS Pricing Arrangements and Price Limits](#) for information about claiming of non-face-to-face support provision.

## **New employees**

Providers can claim for funding in a participant's plan to establish their workplace support needs. This funding can be from the participant's Core budget or their Capacity Building budget or a combination, depending on the support being delivered.

Once the participant agrees to the supports being provided, it is important to know whether there is sufficient funding in the participant's budget to enable the participant to start and continue working until their scheduled plan review. If there are not sufficient funds available, the participant can submit a [change of circumstances form](#) to initiate a plan review.

Participants can also fill out the [Information for participants working in an ADE](#) to assist with preparation for a plan review. Providers should assist participants with completing these forms.

## **NDIS Disability Support Worker Cost Model**

Price limits for supports in employment are based on the [NDIS Disability Support Worker Cost Model](#) and align with NDIS pricing for group supports. The Model contains the cost components of delivering a billable hour of support, including:

- base pay
- shift loadings
- holiday pay
- salary on costs
- supervision costs
- utilisation (non-billable time)
- corporate overheads
- margin or profit.

Further information about price limits and pricing, including the broader pricing strategy and the Disability Support Worker Cost Model, can be found on the [NDIS website](#).

## **Pricing arrangements in remote and very remote areas**

The NDIS pays a loading on the hourly rate for services that are delivered in remote or very remote areas.

Under DSS, the Rural and Remote Supplement paid to ADEs was based on the Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia (ARIA) Classification and paid as a monthly supplement amount. The NDIA uses the Modified Monash Model to determine regional, remote and very remote areas.

Further information on pricing in regional, remote and very remote areas appears in the [NDIS Pricing Arrangements and Price Limits](#).

## Transition to the new pricing framework

### Preparing participants and NDIA staff for the change

Participants with a plan review scheduled after 1 July 2020 have been provided with information about the changes. Participants were contacted directly via email, letter or phone, depending on their communication preference.

ADEs can help by sharing information with participants to support the planning conversation, including, where appropriate, a description of current on-the-job support arrangements.

Flyers to guide the conversation and help participants can be downloaded from the [Finding, keeping and changing jobs](#) page of the NDIS website:

- [Information for participants working in an ADE \(DOCX 1.3MB\)](#)
- [Easy Read – Information for participants working in ADE \(PDF 6.8MB\)](#)
- [Easy Read – Information for participants working in ADE \(DOCX 35KB\)](#)

Local area coordinators and NDIA planning staff have the tools and resources to prepare plans to promote employment pathways and outcomes, including on-the-job supports to maintain employment. Comprehensive education and communication activities with these staff commenced in advance of the changes and are ongoing.

Participants can bring a family member, friend, advocate or anyone else to their planning meeting. If a participant needs help to arrange an advocate to attend they can contact their local area coordinator or NDIA planner.

Providers can best assist by clarifying any points that might be unclear and ensuring the participant has all necessary information in advance of their planning conversation.

### ADEs choosing when to transition

ADE providers have until 31 December 2021 to transition to the new pricing arrangements.

Plans developed after 1 July 2020, when the new support items and price limits came into effect, are funded under the new arrangements. Funding for employment supports will be moved from a participant's Capacity Building budget, into their Core budget. This will happen as they receive new or renewed plans.

From 1 July 2020, ADEs have been able to use the new pricing; however, they can continue to claim, for a period up to 31 December 2021, the equivalent Case Based Funding or Average Outlet Price with the agreement of the participant. Claiming at the current levels is possible for plans that include the new funding arrangements.

### Claiming during transition

ADEs should make well-informed decisions about when and how they transition to the new pricing framework.

Because claiming at the new prices is only available for plans reviewed after 1 July 2020, providers will have a dual funding and claiming method until the last supported employee completes a plan review. Current service bookings remain in place for existing plans.

When participants receive an NDIS plan, funding for supports in employment is in their Core budget under the support category of Assistance with Social, Economic and Community Participation. Providers should make appropriate [service bookings](#).

| PURPOSE                  | OUTCOME DOMAIN                     | SUPPORT CATEGORY   |
|--------------------------|------------------------------------|--|
| <b>CORE</b>              | Daily Living                       | 01 Assistance with Daily Life  |
|                          | Daily Living                       | 02 Transport   |
|                          | Daily Living                       | 03 Consumables   |
|                          | Social and Community Participation | 04 Assistance with Social, Economic and Community Participation      |
|                          | Work                               | 04 Assistance with Social, Economic and Community Participation      |
| <b>CAPITAL</b>           | Daily Living                       | 05 Assistive Technology  |
|                          | Home                               | 06 Home Modifications and Specialised Disability Accommodation (SDA) |
| <b>CAPACITY BUILDING</b> | Choice and Control                 | 07 Support Coordination  |
|                          | Home                               | 08 Improved Living Arrangements                                      |
|                          | Social and Community Participation | 09 Increased Social and Community Participation                      |
|                          | Work                               | 10 Finding and Keeping a Job   |
|                          | Relationships                      | 11 Improved Relationships  |
|                          | Health and Wellbeing               | 12 Improved Health and Wellbeing                                     |
|                          | Lifelong Learning                  | 13 Improved Learning   |
|                          | Choice and Control                 | 14 Improved Life Choices   |
|                          | Daily Living                       | 15 Improved Daily Living Skills                                      |

Providers can, with the agreement of the participant, charge the new prices before a plan review as long as the participant has sufficient funding in their Core support budget. In this case, providers should claim against existing funding within the participant’s Capacity Building budget before claiming against funding within a Core budget.

Funding for supports in employment will only be included in participant plans for 48 weeks, allowing for 4 weeks of paid annual leave each year.

#### Scenario 4 – Claiming during transition

XYZ ADE have discussed the pricing transition with their NDIS participants. Vanessa, an employee receiving supports in employment and working 16 hours per week over 4 days, wants to transition to the new pricing to enable her to receive the supports she needs to meet her new employment goal of moving into a new role which is 21 hours over 5 days per week.

Vanessa was previously assessed at DMI Level 3 and currently has \$6,000 dollars left in her Finding and Keeping a Job budget.

Vanessa has a discussion with her supervisor and they use her typical pattern of supports in the workplace to develop her service agreement. Vanessa works with 4 other participants and agrees that XYZ ADE will provide her with 21 hours of support in a group each week at 1:5 as well as 1 hour per week of non-face-to-face time to cover the work they do to

prepare, monitor and report on her progress towards her employment goals. This means they would be claiming \$272.12 from her plan each week.

XYZ ADE will utilise the remaining Finding and Keeping a Job budget in Vanessa's plan by using the duplicate line item 10\_801\_0133\_5\_1\_D Supports in Employment - Weekday to claim the \$272.12 per week. Once this funding is exhausted, they can then move to claiming from Vanessa's Core budget using the line item 04\_801\_0133\_5\_1 Supports in Employment - Weekday Daytime

Note: Actual line items will vary depending on the time of support delivery and the provider's eligibility for TTP.

It is important that the participant understands the implications for an earlier transition, and that a request for a plan review simply for the purpose of early transition will not satisfy the criteria for requesting a plan review because of changed circumstances. The NDIS [Operational Guidelines](#) provide details around the circumstances of an unscheduled plan review and note that:

Generally, a participant's request for a review of their plan will not be accepted where the request for review simply reflects the participant's desire to have increased supports, or supports of a nature similar to other participants. For example, the participant is requesting additional funding as they have exhausted their budget on other flexible support categories in their plan.

In summary, ADEs that delay their transition to the new pricing:

- Can continue to claim using the support item 04\_891\_0133\_5\_1 Supports in Employment - Transitional Funding Arrangements when a participant has had their plan review and the new funding has been allocated to their Core budget.
- Will need to input the total dollar value of the claim against the item quantity field. This is a single support item, priced at \$1.00 per unit located in the Core budget that will allow for the equivalent weekly DMI or AOP value to be claimed at the relevant rate
- Can employ new participants by claiming for the provision of supports at their weekly Average Outlet Price using the support item 04\_891\_0133\_5\_1 Supports in Employment - Transitional Funding Arrangements.
- Can claim the 2020-21 Average Outlet Pricing rates at 2.1% indexation. The 2020-21 DSS DMI rates are available on the [DSS website](#).

By 31 December 2021, all providers must use the new pricing framework for all participants.

Plans with a longer duration may not be due for review until after December 2021. The NDIA has a process in place to ensure no participant is disadvantaged in these circumstances and all plans for participants working in ADEs will be reviewed well before the transition date of 31 December 2021.

## Provider responsibilities

### Service agreements and Employment Contracts

A service agreement between the participant and the provider should detail the individualised supports and the steps to achieving the participant's goals. It ensures that the participant and provider have an agreed set of expectations, including the use of the program of supports approach. The service agreement forms the basis for a service booking.

ADEs, being both support provider and employer, should consider the relationship between the service agreement and the participant's employment contract, ensuring the participant understands the importance of purchasing supports to maintain required work standards.

Once a service agreement has been finalised, a registered provider, participant or plan manager will make a service booking that specifies type of support, length of time and a funding amount against which the provider can claim payments. At this stage, service bookings are not required where a participant is using a non-registered provider but a service agreement must be completed.

For more information about service agreements and your provider obligations visit the [Service agreements page of the NDIS website](#).

### Evidence of service

The Provider Payment Assurance Program confirms the accuracy of payment requests submitted by registered providers. Providers must keep full and accurate records of supports delivered. Failure to do so may result in repayment to the NDIA.

The provision of most core supports can be evidenced through a service agreement and staff rosters or logs, some complex core supports may also require a case note or report.

More information about payment assurance and supporting documentation can be found on the [Getting paid page of the NDIS website](#).

## Additional resources

The changes to supports in employment are effective from 1 July 2020.

We have dedicated staff to answer queries that you may have. This could be either your provider relationship manager or a member of your local Provider Engagement team.

For enquiries or for more information, please email [provider.support@ndis.gov.au](mailto:provider.support@ndis.gov.au)

For more information:

- NDIS [Participant Employment Strategy](#)
- NDIS [Annual Price Review Report](#)
- [Summary of Annual Price Review 2020-21 outcomes](#)
- [NDIS Pricing Arrangements and Price Limits and Support Catalogue](#)
- [Understanding pricing changes—for participants](#)
- [Reasonable and necessary explained](#)